

5-4-2001

UNH Offers Hotel Intern Experience

Janet Lathrop

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.unh.edu/news>

Recommended Citation

Lathrop, Janet, "UNH Offers Hotel Intern Experience" (2001). *UNH Today*. 2491.
<https://scholars.unh.edu/news/2491>

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Administrative Offices at University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Media Relations by an authorized administrator of University of New Hampshire Scholars' Repository. For more information, please contact nicole.hentz@unh.edu.

[Whittemore
School of
Business
and
Economics](#)

[New
England
Center at
UNH](#)

UNH Offers Hotel Intern Experience

By [Janet Lathrop](#)
UNH News Bureau

May 4, 2001

DURHAM, N.H. -- Four hospitality management students at the University of New Hampshire's Whittemore School of Business and Economics are just finishing a hotel management internship at the New England Center on campus which promises to kick them into contention for top job slots after graduation.

"It's taken what we've learned in four years of college and suddenly we're putting it all into practice," says senior Marissa Soldiviero. Fellow intern Sean Clark, also a Whittemore School senior, agrees. "More than almost any other major on campus, ours is practical. This internship gives us a place to work directly on all kinds of projects we've read about. It's great." Two other interns this year are senior Lisa Cade and sophomore Sara Maziarz.

The students have worked closely with Gary Armitage, general manager, plus other New England Center hotel and conference center managers, to begin compiling written Standard Operating Procedures for each department, and to support employee empowerment, which is part of a quality customer service plan. Interns meet for a minimum one hour of class time each week at the center with Armitage and their academic advisor, Udo Schlentrich, visiting professor of hospitality management at the Whittemore School. Students spend another five more hours, sometimes more, actually working at the front desk or in the dining room, for example.

Schlentrich, a former manager of luxury hotels, director of Hilton International and a founder of the Omni group, points out that "this is our laboratory. Chemists have their benches, but for us, the New England Center is where the rubber meets the road. Here students get a

real taste of what it is to operate a fine hotel from top to bottom." Schlentrich came to UNH from Strathclyde University, Glasgow, Scotland, one of the world's most prestigious schools of hospitality management. He calls the New England Center's hospitality management internship, which will continue next year, a "win-win" situation for all -- students, the center, and the university.

All agree that his dedication to the hotel internship program provides the spark needed to keep everyone on task and enthusiastically goal-oriented. Also, Schlentrich's academic research on customer loyalty in hospitality service industries strongly suggests that people come back to a particular hotel because they have received outstanding service -- not satisfactory, not even "very good" as identified by questionnaire, but excellent.

Analysis of interview and questionnaire data by Schlentrich and his Whittemore School colleague Eleanne Solorzano, associate professor of decision science, shows that personal service builds customer loyalty. And employee empowerment -- the idea that every hotel staff member is 100 percent responsible for providing excellent personal service -- is the best way to build excellence into a quality service plan. "Our field is not abstract," Schlentrich explains. "We're researching common sense, to some extent, but increasingly, we find it's the relationship that you are able to build with a customer that counts. That message will stand our interns in good stead over their entire careers." The internship is "one of the greatest resume boosters we could give our students," he adds.

Armitage agrees. "Our goal is to take the New England Center to a five-star property. There are some physical limitations that may prevent that, but we have the people to provide five-star service," he adds. "We have a great management team in place now. And when we combine this with the superb work that the interns are doing, the result will allow the New England Center to move rapidly toward the cutting edge of the hospitality industry." Already, the New England Center is rated 62nd out of 29,000 North American hotel properties in revenue per room, one of the industry's yardsticks of success. "We provide a highly motivated work

environment for these students," Armitage says. "It's a relationship that definitely benefits both the New England Center and the hospitality management program."

[Back to UNH News Bureau](#)